

The Perks of Being a Wallflower

The Perks of Being a Wallflower is a fiction novel written by Stephen Chbosky and was published on February 1, 1999 by MTV and Pocket Books. The novel is divided into four parts, and is written as an epistolary novel. An epistolary novel is one that is written in the form of a letter or series of diary/ journal entries. The story encompasses the life of a young boy who calls himself “Charlie” in order to remain anonymous. Throughout the story, Charlie addresses issues surrounding his life through the letters to a person he does not know personally.

The setting of the story is Charlie’s life and his surroundings. There was no specific place stated within the story because of Charlie wanting to remain anonymous. However, Charlie describes his home-life and his high school and all the different tragic incidents that happens there and in his town. This story speaks of what it is like to grow up in high school. The entries are more than intimate. They are funny, serious, alarming and devastating all at once. Main characters in the story are Charlie, Sam, Patrick, Bill, and Mary Elizabeth. Charlie is the narrator of the story and is the one who is telling about his life. Sam and Patrick become Charlie’s best friends. They are brother and sister and do everything with each other. The two enjoy Charlie’s company and try to help Charlie find his way through life and all its issues. Bill is Charlie’s English teacher who Charlie speaks to. Bill knows a lot about Charlie’s life and personal issues, and gives Charlie books to read to help him get through these issues. Often times, Bill and Charlie speak about issues that a teacher and student should never really speak about. Mary Elizabeth was Charlie’s first girlfriend. Charlie never really liked her in that way but he knew she like him. Charlie was in love with Sam, but didn’t want to hurt Mary Elizabeth’s feelings,

so he never said no. Because of this reason, Charlie and Mary Elizabeth shared a lot of “firsts” together.

The story opened up with Charlie speaking of a death of his close friend due to suicide, death of a family member, experimenting with sex, drugs, alcohol, masturbation, and falling victim to rape. As the story progressed, Charlie further encountered ideas of homosexuality, “blow jobs” and even stronger drugs like LSD. Charlie’s life continually consisted of twists and turns that threw the reader for a loop. He was lost and confused, and was in the search for someone to listen to him. He didn’t know how to stand up for himself and endured horrible things for the simple fact that he couldn’t say no. He never wanted to be judged and only wanted friends and to be loved.

Charlie was caught between everything he encountered in his life, and trying to run from it. He wanted to find out who he was, what he wanted, and where he wanted to go. He was on the quest to live and learn for himself. He wanted to speak his thoughts and ideas and the only way he knew how to was to write. Charlie was on the wild and emotional roller coaster days known as growing up. The journal entries within the book allow the reader to dive knee deep into uncharted territory and into a life that no one should ever have to endure.

While reading this novel I was completely surprised. I have to admit, there was definitely a lot of sexual innuendos, references to homosexuality, drugs, alcohol, and rape. I have never read a book that addresses so many critical issues within such a short time span. However, I absolutely loved this book. The way Chbosky wrote this novel made me as the reader feel like I was Charlie dealing with all these issues. I was able to gain a new perspective about issues that I have never had to personally deal with. While

reading, I was able to see what it would feel like if I had been raped or what it would be like if I were high on LSD. I was able to see the scary side of the stories and incidences listed.

This novel in my opinion is by no means necessary for young children, or even middle aged children to read for that matter; however, it does provide an insight that might actually be beneficial to high school students. I definitely recommend high school students and anyone else above that age to read this book. It is very interesting and really makes a reader think in new ways. Charlie really surprised me all throughout the book. I never expected things to end up like they did in the book, and I didn't expect Charlie to deal with things like he did. I do feel that Charlie was persistent in finding his place, but I do not relate to him. I am completely different than him, and if I found myself in the situations he found himself in, I believe I would do things different. I'd figure out a way to get out of the situations and I think I would find new people and places to hang out. I wouldn't hold on to them because I feel those situations only brought him even further down. This is a very interesting, touching, exciting, and sad novel. It is one that I believe all readers can relate to in one way or another.